



GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)

Significant Contributor to the Fatal Four for the Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled

Definition — A digestive disorder that affects the ring of muscle between the esophagus and stomach. When this muscle is not working properly, whatever is in the stomach flows back into the esophagus (food, fluid, and stomach acid).

Why are individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at a high risk?

- Posture problems
- Lack of mobility
- Improper positioning
- Certain medications
- Excessive drooling

Signs & Symptoms

- Heartburn (can last as long as two hours)
- Regurgitation (partially digested food or acid comes up from the stomach into the throat/mouth)

Preventative Action Steps

- After eating, stay upright or elevate head when lying down for at least 30 minutes or as prescribed by a physician
- Avoid foods and beverages that increase symptoms (chocolate, fatty foods, coffee, citrus, tomato, spicy foods, etc.)
- Space out mealtime and decrease portions (allows stomach to empty)
- Encourage weight loss

